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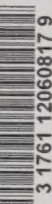
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Ontario

Ministry of  
Correctional  
Services

Honourable Gord Walker  
Minister  
Glenn R. Thompson  
Deputy Minister



*A program that benefits  
the community as well  
as the offender.*

## PHILOSOPHY OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER PROGRAM

Community service orders (CSOs) were introduced in Ontario to provide the courts with a community-based alternative to incarceration for non-violent offenders and are an additional condition of a probation order.

Imprisonment is often seen as inappropriate or too severe a punishment for certain types of crimes, and the costs to the taxpayer have become prohibitive.

Fines do not affect all people equally. For those with substantial incomes, fines may have little more than nuisance value, yet the same monetary penalty may cause real hardship to a person of limited means.

Community supervision encourages offenders to seek or continue employment, receive vocational training, educational upgrading or assistance with personal and family problems.

Community service as a condition of probation and as an option to incarceration requires offenders to make reparation to the community, and thereby encourages them to develop a more responsible attitude toward the community.

It provides a framework within which the individual can develop new skills, abilities and interests, establish new friendships, and find more positive ways to spend leisure time.

Another major objective of the program is to encourage the participation of the community in the criminal justice system. Consequently, six of the seven pilot projects in operation were administered by private agencies under contract with the ministry of correctional services. The seventh project was sponsored by the Ajax/Oshawa probation office.

By the end of 1981, about 50 CSO programs will be operational throughout Ontario. This dramatic increase in only four years can be attributed to the community support of the program and to the strong commitment by social agencies to make work available and to supervise offenders in a wide variety of CSO placements.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

After being satisfied that an offender is suitable for a CSO program and that an appropriate work placement is available, the judge may issue a probation order requiring the individual to work a specific number of hours for the benefit of the community.

The types of activities in which offenders may be ordered to participate are those tasks which would generally not be performed at all except by volunteers.

None of the work undertaken will displace members of the community from paid employment.

Offenders do not necessarily come into contact with their victims. A CSO may have no bearing on the crime, but offers offenders a general social service type of work which interests them and at the same time benefits the community. The following activities are all possibilities in this category:

- Assistance to the elderly and the handicapped through such programs as delivering hot meals, volunteer work in hospitals, or individual help with grass cutting, snow shoveling and other general chores.
- A variety of activities through placement with local community agencies requiring volunteer assistance such as YM/YMCA, humane societies, associations for the mentally retarded, and so on.
- Group activities such as the clean-up of parks and other public property.

On the other hand, offenders who have committed acts of vandalism may find themselves cleaning up and repairing the damage they have caused.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFENDER

Offenders are expected to work regularly, co-operatively, and reliably at their assignments. Both offenders and the community agencies supervising their placement keep a record of the hours of work performed.

In most cases offenders will find themselves working with other volunteers, and will become part of the agencies' volunteer members. Many offenders have continued to volunteer at their CSO placement after the terms of the order were satisfied. Others have found paid employment as a result of the CSO experience.

Failure to complete an assignment is considered a violation of the probation order. If offenders are returned to court they could be fined and/or sentenced to jail.

However, research findings indicate that 93 per cent of CSO assignments are successfully completed.

The majority of offenders find CSOs a worthwhile experience and much more productive than serving a sentence in jail.

